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ABSTRACT

Educational supervision may be categorized according to three philosophical positions with distinct methodologies: essentialism/directive supervision; experimentalism/collaborative supervision; and existentialism/nondirective supervision. This paper proposes that time and effort are required to develop key interpersonal skills needed for facilitating teamwork and collaborative relationships among teachers, peers, and supervisors. The training program described fits most closely the collaborative supervision model. After outlining Theory Z principles applicable to supervision in the schools, the paper focuses on two leadership skills (listening and developing improvement plans) that administrators can learn to use more effectively within a Theory Z context and cites supportive research findings. Based on Theory Z principles, the paper assumes that level relationships between instructional supervisors and teachers are more effective than vertical ones, that the primary motivation for instructional improvement is the teacher's, and that teamwork is an essential ingredient of the change process. Advice is then provided for learning to listen and developing improvement plans. A single-case research project to assess the training program's effectiveness is briefly described. The study showed that supervisor behavior moved toward collaborative styles immediately after training in both quality and quantity. (Six references) (MLH)

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Developing Supervision Skills: Establishing an Effective Climate, Listening, and Developing Teacher Improvement Plans

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An educational leader must be a person of many abilities, combining knowledge, technical expertise, and interpersonal skills. This paper proposes that time and effort are required to develop key interpersonal skills required to be an effective leader, particulary those that facilitate team work and collaborative relationships between teachers and supervisors, and between teachers and their peers.

Not everyone agrees that collaborative styles are the best for supervision. Glickman and Tamashiro (1980) have delineated educational supervision into three philosophical positions that have developed educational supervision methods: "essentialism/directive supervision, experimentalism/ collaborative supervison, and existentialism/nondirective supervision." They describe Directive Supervision as an approach based upon the belief that teaching consists of technical skills with known standards and competencies, and for teachers to be effective the supervisor's role is to inform, direct, model, and assess those competencies. Collaborative Supervision is based upon the belief that teaching is primarily problem solving, whereby two or more persons jointly pose hypotheses to a problem, experiment, and implement those teaching strategies that appear to be more relevant in their own surroundings. The supervisor's role is to guide the problem solving process, be an active member of the interaction, and keep the teacher focused on their common problem. Non-Directive Supervision has as its premise the concept that learning is primarily a private experience in which individuals must come up with their own solutions to improving the classroom experience for students. The supervisor's role is to listen, be non-judgmental, and provide self-awareness and clarification experiences for teachers. None of these types has yet proven more effective than the others in hard, experimental research.

The authors have developed a training program for educational leaders which fits most closely the Collaborative Supervision model (Green, 1984). We have examined Theory Z management principles (Ouchi, 1981) and believe they have the potential to improve performance in the schools. These methods have been used extensively in business and industry, particularly in Japan, with great success. This paper will briefly outline relevant Theory Z principles which we believe are applicable to supervision in the schools, then focus on two leadership skills which we believe leaders can learn to use much more effectively than they are presently doing within a Theory Z context, and finally cite impact research findings to support our position.

Relevant Theory Z Principles

First, we have assumed the position that level relationships between instructional supervisors and teachers are more effective than vertical ones. While the findings of Bloomberg and Amidon (1965) have been controversial, they are still widely quoted and accepted. They reported that collaborative styles lead to greater conference productivity. That is, conferences were seen to be more effective by the person being supervised if both the supervisor and the supervisee had the opportunity to make input.

We have also assumed that the primary responsibility and motivation for change and instructional improvement is the teachers's, with the supervisor acting in the joint roles of catalyst and facilitator. Nevertheless, the climate within which the teacher must function is crucial to growth, and it is the supervisor's responsibility to establish that climate. The Theory Z climate, as described by Ouchi, offers many useful principles for establishing an effective management environment in business and industry. We assume that these principles can be applied effectively to educational environments as well.

The first step in producing a Theory Z organization is to build a team relationship with emphasis on establishing a team relationship in the organization as a whole. For example, if our instructional leader is a building principal, he or she would concentrate on building a team relationship in the total school rather than among reading teams, math teams, and the like. Team building at a level lower

than the entire school often ends up with a bunch of deviant teams, each with its own subculture and set of subobjectives, none of them willing or able to coordinate with each other. In establishing a team relationship, Theory Z leaders emphasize good communication, cooperation, and knowledge. These principles of leadership are certainly not new, but we may forget them quickly and need to be reminded. What would instructional supervision look like if practiced in a Theory Z climate?

First, much attention would be given by the instructional leader to establishing organization wide goals and objectives to which all members of his team are committed. The specifics of these goals would be arrived at collaboratively between all team members. Of course schools operate within mission statements, district and state guidelines, and the press of their constituencies. All of these sources of influence must be considered by the team; however, the team can choose its area of focus within these guidelines.

Second, the individual team member (teacher, staff, etc.) would assume responsibility for improvement. The teacher who understands the school's policies and objectives, and who has been fully committed to a set of schoolwide improvement objectives and purposes, will be very active and take major responsibility for improvement. After adequate reflection and feedback regarding their performance, the teacher will assume the major responsibility for establishing individual goals and making improvements.

Third, team efforts will be brought to bear to help an individual teacher's performance. In a Theory Z organization, teacher's working in groups bring their collective problem-solving abilities to bear on the instructional problems of one of their group members. Such teams would epitomize trust, subtlety, and intimacy in their relationships. Teachers will accept help if they trust team members who care about them. Feedback or other efforts to improve the teacher's performance will be done subtlely, rather than with harsh directness, to insure that egos remain intact and self-esteem is maintained.

Current school climates in the United States seem far removed from Theory Z climates. Too often there is an independent relationship between leaders and teachers, and between teachers and other teachers. Instead of cooperation in instructional improvement, teachers function fairly autonomously from each other with little trust or intimacy. Very seldom have they seen each other teach, and they refrain from commenting on or reflecting openly on each others performance. Relationships between teachers and leaders tend to be more vertical than level, and leader feedback, though the leader would desire otherwise, is often viewed as judgmental and directive, almost the opposite of trust and subtlety.

The implementation of these principles would be the beginning to establishing a Theory Z environment within an organization. We will now turn to two important skills a leader needs to function effectively in a Theory Z environment. One is a relationship skill--listening, and the other a procedural skill--helping a teacher develop a self improvement plan. These of course are only two of many specific skills needed by an effective administrator who is using collaborative supervision styles. Others which could become the focus of training are: becoming aware and sensitive to the environment in their organization, generating alternatives, managing conflict, analyzing and synthesizing a situation, thinking and reasoning in terms of probabilities, and evaluating the decisions that have been made.

Listening Skills

As an administrator you need to be an effective listener in order to be approachable. It is especially important if you want to be a collaborative supervisor. However, you will also reap such benefits as better rapport with students and teachers, a better understanding of their needs, and more productive visits with parents, students, and teachers.

Listening is not an easy skill to acquire. It takes time, effort and practice. Most difficult is developing the ability to empathize--to understand how others feel. This is especially hard when

dealing with a person whose viewpoint is different from our own. It is also very difficult if you are busy and have an agenda of your own that you want to accomplish.

As you develop the ability to listen to another with empathy, there is risk in being changed yourself, either in attitudes, point of view, or personality. And thus, successful implementation of effective listening skills can lead to your growth as an administrator. Effective listening can be described in many ways. Below are five key actions which we believe to be important in developing listening skills. You as the reader may be aware of others that you feel are important, but we suggest these as a way of beginning, and ask you to add yours if you like.

First, begin with an open mind. It is important to begin a meeting without preconceived notions about what a person wishes to say. Therefore, discipline yourself to listen for meaning and feelings--both expressed and unexpressed--with an open mind.

Often there's a tendency to begin an interview with one's mind already made up about what the person intends to communicate. That is, based on what you might already know about a person or the problem, you believe you can predict the conversation--or even the outcome! Nothing blocks accurate information faster than this attitude.

Second, Let your actions show interest and warmth. It is not enough simply to *feel* interested and friendly toward a person. You have to *show* this interest through body language and the removal of physical barriers. You communicate interest by the expression on your face, through eye contact, by keeping your attention on the listener, and by responding with questions and comments. You can also establish emotional closeness by removing physical barriers, which often intimidate. Sit side by side with your visitor rather than across a forbidding desk. Reduce the physical distance between you and your listener. Between 2 and 4 feet is about right, depending upon the intimacy which has already been established in your relationship. Your speaker will interpret physical closeness as a desire for open communication and personal warmth.

Third, paraphrase content and reflect feeling. As an active listener, periodically reword what has been said to be sure you are understanding. Paraphrase in a question format using such phrases as "You feel that . . ., "From your point of view . . ." In this way you will be able to receive confirmation from the sender that you are correctly understanding the message and the feelings expressed.

Forth, clarify thoughts as necessary. One of the many problems in understanding others is that speakers tend to wander as they talk, may be overly general or leave out important details. This is likely to be particularly true in emotionally charged situations, when people are not likely to think clearly anyway. You can help the speaker give you essential information by asking for examples, details, and definitions of terms. Be careful, however, to avoid digressions, interruptions, and interrogations.

Fifth, summarize content and feelings. Your thought speed is four to five times greater than your speaking speed. Take advantage of this thought/speech time differential to review and evaluate main points and feelings. You can also use the time to anticipate the speaker's next point and weigh the evidence. Care must be taken, however, not to become too preoccupied in these tasks to the detriment of the main task of listening.

Developing an Improvement Plan

Although there are many ways to learn to teach, or to learn to improve teaching performance (formal classes, seminars, reading journals, attending conferences, observing others), the best place to perfect teaching skills is right in the classroom. But it takes more than just experience. As John Dewey pointed out: Experience + Reflection = Growth (Dewey, 1933). As a supervisor, you are in an ideal position to help teachers learn and grow from their classroom experiences. You may do this by facilitating the reflective process in your teachers.

There is a fundamental truth about reflection which should be recognized by the supervisor. Teacher growth does not come about by the supervisor's reflection, but by the teacher's reflection on

their own teaching performance. In other words growth occurs only if thinking about teaching takes place in the learner. The learner is the one who can bring the growth about, not the supervisor. The supervisor can help stimulate such reflection; however, and should direct his or her efforts accordingly. You are a facilitator, an organizer, a remover of obstacles. Many teachers see a supervisor as an evaluator in a very traditional sense--a judge and jury whose reason for being is to find fault. Shake these attitudes by presenting yourself as a helper. Remember, committed teachers will accomplish far more on their own than you can ever force them to do.

Theory Z approaches to supervision would suggest that the supervisor is not the only resource a teacher can use for reflection. If the way were provided, the teacher's colleagues could also be helpful if they have learned the skills of trust, subtlety, and intimacy. Team approaches to supervision would seem to greatly enhance the opportunity for reflection.

No matter how competent teachers are (or think they are), there is always room for improvement. Knowing this, most teachers will be willing to cooperate in an effort to improve if the emotional climate is open and healthy. The following are some key actions we suggest for conducting an informal meeting with individual teachers and helping them develop a plan for individual improvement.

First, explore criteria for teacher effectiveness. A brief, relaxed discussion should be conducted of the qualities necessary in a good teacher or in good teaching. The goal of this discussion is a mutual understanding and appreciation of the other's point of view. However, resist the temptation to dictate at length your expectations and instead concentrate on exploring the teacher's values and goals. If a team has been involved, also help the teacher reflect on their observations.

Second, determine one specific area in which the teacher wishes to improve. There are two keys to the success of this action: (a) Allow the teacher to decide where improvement should be made. You might find it useful to summarize the teacher's comments on good teaching and then ask him to suggest an area to work on. If the teacher needs to think for a moment, be patient. Don't rush in or apply pressure. (b) Limit the area of improvement to a single, attainable goal. If the teacher suggests something too grandiose or vague, suggest ways to limit or specify it.

Third, develop a personalized teacher improvement plan. There are several ways to approach a plan, ranging from a formal written plan to an informal discussion. While your system will depend on the personality of the teacher, usually a detailed written plan works best. Most goal planning approaches include four steps: decide on a specific goal, plan concrete actions to reach the goal, determine criteria that will indicate when the goal has been reached, and set a time limit.

Forth, plan follow-up activities. To conclude the interview, set up another formal meeting to discuss progress, allowing sufficient time for the teacher to put the plan into operation. In addition, it's a good idea to find moments to talk informally to the teacher to see what progress is being made. This will show your continuing interest.

Impact Research on Model

To test the impact of this program with supervisors, Taylor (1987) trained 4 building principal using two modules from the Education in Supervision program, Module 4: Listening Effectively, and Module 2: Improving Teacher Effectiveness: The Teacher Improvement Plan. The research design was a pre-experimental, single-case study with three purposes: to produce changes in supervisor behavior that would be readily observable, to measure behavior patterns precisely using a computer aided observation technology called Timed Interval Categorical Oriented Recorder-Data Acquisition Computer (TICOR-DAC), and to observe the behavior patterns over an extended period of time. The experiment was conducted in four phases: (1) Pre-training when base line data was gathered, (2) was a training phase where the supervisors were taken through Modules 4: Listening Effectively, and Module 2: Improving Teacher Effectiveness: The Teacher Improvement Plan. (3) Phase 3 was an extended history phase, and (4) Phase 4 was a second round of training using Module 3: Improving Teacher Effectiveness: The Professional Progress Interview. During each phase each supervisory interview was video taped and rated by trained observers using the Allred Interaction Analysis and the TICOR-DAC. Additionally, each video taped interview was rated by the authors to determine the

extent to which key actions taught in the training were being carried out by the supervisors.

The study showed that training had an immediate impact on supervisor behavior by reducing total talk time in their interviews and increasing the supervisee talk time. The training also tended to reduce supervisor's vertical talk in favor of level talk. In other words, supervisor behavior moved toward collaborative styles immediately after training in both quantity and quality. Over time these improvements tend to wash out somewhat, but improved with an additional round of training. Also, supervisees reported more satisfaction with their supervisory interviews after the supervisors were trained. Ratings of the extent to which key actions were being carried out in interviews was also rated as much improved after training.

These findings are viewed as positive evidence of the effectiveness of the training program. They show the training in on the right track, but with modifications could be even stronger. For example, Taylor recommended that trainers expand training time to a minimum of 15 hours, that leaders video tape their interviews and reflect on their performance, and that coaches be used in a practicum setting in the schools to help leaders perfect their skills.

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